

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services



REPORT CARD July 1, 2006

Safe Kids-Healthy Families – Where We Are Today

Keeping kids safe and secure in nurturing and well-functioning families is the primary goal of the DSHS Children's Administration.

We recognize the need for reform but we also must focus our efforts to achieve long-lasting positive results for children and families. In the past, in order to be responsive to identified shortcomings in the system, CA tended to focus on symptoms, not core reforms. This resulted in an over-promised agenda that outstripped the

organizational capacity to successfully deliver and sustain outcomes. Improvements can be sustained only through a high-performing organization with the capacity to support excellent outcomes for children and families. To be successful, our agenda for reform includes:

- Effective services that successfully meet the specific needs of families and other caregivers.
- Consistent child welfare

practice that protects children and strengthens families.

- Well-trained and supported workforce.
- Strong business processes that support our mission.

It is very difficult for any organization to successfully complete multiple improvement agendas. Reform must be implemented at a pace that is as fast as possible, yet does not overload the organization's ability to absorb change.

Seeing kids more quickly and more often

The Governor's focus on child safety led to a mandate for social workers to respond to child abuse and neglect referrals in a shorter period of time and to visit children in our care more often.

The Governor follows our data and holds us accountable for making improvements in our practice.

"Our focus is on improving the lives of the children and families we serve. Every change we make, we do with that focus in mind"

Assistant Secretary Cheryl Stephani

Where We Started A Year Ago

Large reform agenda that responds to many mandates from many different sources

- Federal Child and Family Services Review / Program Improvement Plan
- Settlement agreement in the Braam foster care lawsuit
- Child fatality review recommendations
- Kids Come First Phase II: Safe Kids-Healthy Families reform plan

Limited organizational capacity and follow-through to implement changes

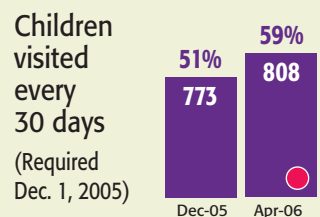
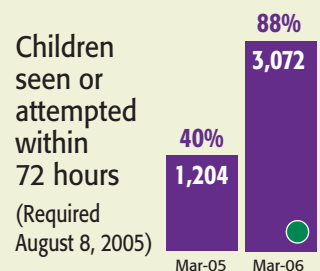
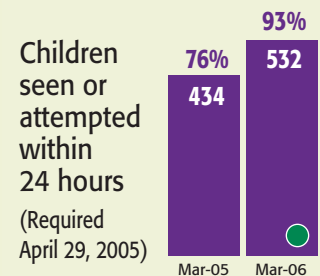
- Business processes—multi-million dollar projected budget overspend
- Organizational culture—gaps between expectations and resources to do the job
- Automated management information system that doesn't meet the needs of the administration

Inconsistent practice around the state

- Practice expectations not well-defined
- Too many unclear policies and procedures
- Large variation in what and how services are delivered

Difficult relationships with community partners and service providers

- Budget cuts strained contracted provider relationships
- Insufficient trust and credibility with our community partners
- Unsatisfactory collaborative processes hurt Tribal relationships



LEGEND

- GREEN: We're meeting or exceeding performance targets.
- YELLOW: We're watching this measure closely and are taking steps to bring it back on target.
- RED: This performance measure is off track. Immediate action is needed.

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Keeping kids safe in foster care and finding stable permanent homes

Some children can be kept safe from abuse or neglect only by moving to foster homes or relatives. Finding homes that suit the needs and personalities of those children is critical to their sense of security and stability. The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of times children move between homes in efforts to find suitable placement.

If a child cannot be reunited with family, the department must find a safe and permanent place for the child to call home, as soon as possible.

Children Are Safe From:	2006 Target	2005 Performance	Status
Repeat Maltreatment	90.1% or more	89.7%	●
Abuse & Neglect in Foster Care	99.43% or more	99.7% (2004)	●

Placement & Permanency	2006 Target	2005 Performance	
Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care	88.45% or more	87.9%	●
Stability of Placement	86.1% or more	85.2%	●
Reunification	76.2% or more	85.9%	●
Adoption	27.5% or more	35.2%	●

Meeting Federal Improvement Goals

Washington is meeting the goal in 17 of 23 federal performance measures. Additional goals could be met by September 2006. At the time of the review in 2004, we had met only 5.

The federal government comprehensively reviews child welfare systems in each state. Washington's review was completed in 2004.

The review measures compliance with federal legislation and provides an opportunity for states to make quality improvements in the services it provides to children and families.

Once a state completes the review, it has two years to work on a program improvement plan before it is reviewed again.

Goals Achieved

- Met all performance goals for child safety.
- Achieved all goals for quickly finding permanent homes for children who cannot be reunited with

their parents and for meeting educational needs of children.

- Greatly exceeded the goal for involving children and families in case planning.

Goals Not Yet Reached

- Frequency of social worker visits with children.
- Finding relatives to care for children.
- Meeting the mental health needs of children.
- Meeting the physical health needs of children.
- Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care.
- Preserving connections with parents, siblings, and other significant people.

Program Improvement Plan

6 Data Measures
23 Case Review Measures
96 Action Steps

Status: ●

What's Next

- An increase in the number of social workers in FY 2007 will help us visit children every 30 days.
- Children will be placed within their families or with someone familiar to them, whenever possible.
- A new practice model and SACWIS will support pathways between assessing families' needs, planning their treatment, and early engagement in appropriate services.
- Evidence-based programs will improve the types of services available to match the current needs of children and families.
- Ongoing work with the Boeing Lean Team will improve our structure, management, and organizational culture.

For the past year, children's services has been guided in organization change under the leadership of the Boeing Lean Team.

Boeing is providing pro bono assistance, with the use of its highly regarded team who has been successful in making organizational cultural changes with non-profit organizations across the nation and government ministries in Australia and other countries.

Improving Foster Care

In August 2004, children's services reached a settlement agreement in a class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of several foster children. An oversight panel was selected to monitor improvements agreed to in the settlement.

The panel has the general responsibility to develop outcomes, benchmarks, and action steps and to establish professional standards regarding each of the six areas identified in the settlement agreement. The Braam Oversight Panel

released an implementation plan in February 2006.

The settlement agreement is a mixture of specific action steps, time tables, and benchmarks with broad improvement goals. The level of effort of each action step and sub-step varies significantly. Some action steps require major re-engineering of a process, program, or system. Many implemen-

tation activities require additional expenditure and significant training and time commitment from line staff, who are already carrying high caseloads.

The department remains concerned about the scope and timing of these changes and the impact on organizational capacity in moving so many measures so quickly.

However, CA is making progress on the action steps and is engaged in reforming the system to improve outcomes, not only for children in foster care, but for all children and families served by the child welfare system.

Implementation Plan

53 Benchmarks
87 Action Steps
437 Sub-steps (approx.)

Status: ●